

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) In a wireless network system comprising at least one wireless access element for communication with at least one remote client element, wherein the at least one wireless access element is operative to transmit neighbor messages, and at least one central control element for controlling and managing wireless connections between access elements and remote client elements, a method facilitating the initialization and configuration of an access element, comprising

monitoring, at a wireless access element, for wireless neighbor messages from one or more neighboring wireless access elements, the wireless neighbor messages identifying a corresponding computer network address of at least one central control element;

selecting a central control element identified in one or more detected wireless neighbor messages;

transmitting, using a corresponding computer network address, a request to the selected central control element; and

associating the wireless access element with the selected central control element to cause the selected central control element to manage wireless connections between the wireless access element and one or more remote client elements;

transmitting wireless management messages sourced from the one or more remote client elements to the selected central control element for processing, wherein the wireless management messages request initiation of wireless connections between the wireless access element and the respective one or more remote client elements; and

tunneling network traffic corresponding to the wireless connections with the remote client elements to the selected central control element.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising exchanging configuration information with the selected central control element.
3. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising transmitting discovery requests over a wired computer network; monitoring for discovery responses to the discovery requests, each discovery response identifying a central control element.
4. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the selecting step comprises selecting a central control element identified in a wireless neighbor message or a discovery response.
5. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the selecting comprises selecting a central control element identified in a wireless neighbor message and a discovery response.
6. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the information includes the computer network addresses of the central control elements in an administrative group associated with the selected central control element.
7. (original) The method of claim 6 further comprising after detecting the failure of the selected central control element, selecting a second central control element from the administrative group; using the computer network address of the selected second central control

element to exchange configuration information with the selected second control element.

8. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the exchanged information allows for operation in an access point mode under the control of the selected central control element.

9. (original) The method of claim 8 further comprising operating in an access point mode under control of the selected central control element.

10. (original) The method of claim 9 further comprising  
after detecting the failure of the selected central control element,  
selecting a second central control element from the administrative group;  
using the computer network address of the selected second central control element to exchange information with the selected second control element.

11. (currently amended) In a wireless network system comprising at least one access element for communication with at least one remote client element, and at least one central control element for controlling and managing wireless connections between access elements and remote client elements, a method facilitating the initialization and configuration of an access element, comprising

detecting, at a wireless access element, at least one neighboring wireless access element;

receiving at least one wireless message from the at least one neighboring wireless access element, the at least one message identifying a corresponding computer network address of at least one central control element;

selecting a central control element identified in one or more received wireless

neighbor messages;

transmitting, using a corresponding computer network address, a request to the selected central control element over a wired computer network; and

operating in an access point mode under control of the selected central control element;

wherein operating in an access point mode comprises

transmitting wireless management messages sourced from the one or more remote client elements to the selected central control element for processing,  
wherein the wireless management messages request initiation of wireless connections between the wireless access element and the respective one or more remote client elements; and

tunneling network traffic corresponding to the wireless connections with the remote client elements to the selected central control element.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the at least one wireless message is a neighbor message.

13. (currently amended) The method of claim 11 further comprising establishing a wireless connection with a detected neighboring wireless access element to receive the at least one wireless message.

14. (currently amended) An apparatus for wireless communication with at least one remote client element and for communication with a central control element, comprising a wireless transmit/receive unit for wireless communication with at least one remote client element;

a network interface for communication with a central control element over a wired computer network;

an access point module controlling the wireless transmit/receive unit and the network interface, wherein the access point module is operative to:

establish and maintain, in conjunction with a managing central control element, wireless connections with remote client elements,

receive control data from a central control element; and

a configuration module operative to:

monitor for wireless neighbor messages from at least one neighboring wireless access element, the wireless neighbor messages identifying a corresponding computer network address of at least one central control element;

select a central control element;

transmit, using a corresponding computer network address, a request to the selected central control element; and

associate with the selected central control element to cause the selected central control element to manage wireless connections between the wireless access element and one or more remote client elements;

transmit wireless management messages sourced from the one or more remote client elements to the selected central control element for processing,  
wherein the wireless management messages request initiation of wireless  
connections between the wireless access element and the respective one or more  
remote client elements; and

tunnel network traffic of the wireless connections with the remote client  
elements to the selected central control element.

15. (original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the configuration module is further operative to exchange configuration information with the selected central control element.

16. (original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the configuration module is further operative to

transmit discovery requests over a wired computer network; and

monitor for discovery responses to the discovery requests, each discovery response identifying a central control element.

17. (original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the configuration module is operative to select a central control element from the central control elements identified in wireless neighbor messages and discovery responses.

18. (original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the access point module is operative to tunnel wireless traffic associated with remote client elements to a central control element.

19. (original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the access point module is operative to switch to a neighbor message mode at periodic intervals to transmit neighbor messages,

receive neighbor messages from neighboring wireless access devices, and process received neighbor messages.